

Saturday, June 10, 2023/ 0900-1030/ Janet Barr Building, RSO Conference Room

Attendees : Genero, Amy, Nelson, Bill, Rodney

On Phone: Jonas, Frank, Andre

**Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council 2023 Retiree Appreciation Day
After Action Review**

EVENT MANAGEMENT

- 1) Who is in charge, or taking the lead, on the event?
 - a. Retiree Council still utilized as event planners which is not the purpose of the RC.
 - b. RSO, by regulation, is the lead for the event under the authority of the Garrison Commander. However, RSO is a contract employee. Government lead defaults to MPD Deputy. Garrison First Sergeant interjected himself into the process. However, MPD Deputy and Garrison First Sergeant did not attend planning meetings with RC nor take the lead for the event, relegating the planning and execution to the RC.
 - c. Garrison Commander has overall responsibility for the event and offered oral support but otherwise fell short in execution.

- 2) There were an unbelievable amount of details that remained unconfirmed less than a week out from the event at the sync meeting, mostly due to confusion as to who was in taking the lead. See #1 above.

- 3) Remove RC from primary event planning responsibilities and return primary lead to RSO and Garrison. Refocus the RC on informing the Garrison Commander on relevant retiree issues as chartered in Army Regulation.

ADVANCE PLANNING / COMMUNICATION

- 4) Fix a date for the event at least six months in advance: Council Co-Chairs informed Garrison Commander of the 18 May proposal on **9 February** 2023. The council drafted an event planning checklist on **25 February**

2023. Garrison Commander did not make a final decision until 1 March 2023. Council co-chairs briefed Garrison Commander on **13 March** on concept of operation and Installation Commander on **17 April**.

- 5) MOI/ OPORD: Garrison Commander and First Sergeant desired to operationalize the event, but an OPORD was never issued. The MOI issued by the Garrison on **10 April 2023** had limited distribution.
- 6) Direct outreach to retirees – 90 days out: Mail to retirees in catchment area, once again, did not go out in a timely manner and did not achieve saturation. The officially provided address list was incomplete. The RSO did not have proper system access to download or modify the list. DMDC digital listing did not occur: Council co-chairs confirmed with MPD Chief on 28 February use of digital listing. MPD Chief informed Council co-chairs on 16 March that they should have list on 17 March. Senior Commander/ Garrison Commander should send out invites to retirees, agencies/vendors, and VIPs. Feedback heard about the cards that were received via mail is that they were addressed to the family member of the retiree but not the retiree him/herself. Specifically, Janet Detwiler told me she received a mailer, but her husband (the retiree) did not. Capitalize on the ability use the email/DMDC digital listings for the retirees in our area and send out regular communication advising them of the retiree council, what we do, when we meet, and solicit additional members.
- 7) In progress reviews: regular updates facilitated by the government were not planned. A government event lead should have held regular updates with key stakeholders to ensure milestones, dates and details were synchronized.
- 8) Agencies/ Vendor Listing: add vendors from Cecil and upper Baltimore counties, share base access info with vendors 45 days prior to event

RAISING FUNDS FOR FOOD

- 9) Budget for the noon meal by legacy financial sponsors competed with concurrent veterans' luncheon, reducing available revenues.

- 10) Luncheon menu and vendor selection: delayed until less than one week prior to event, mainly driven by unsure financial sponsors. Future consideration should be given to not providing a lunch meal for the attendees, just morning refreshments.
- 11) Request 90 days out: Receiving a generous donation from APGFCU on a gift card was problematic in the disposition of unused funds. The RC has no financial vehicle to custodian unused funds. The donor deserves an accounting of donated funds and would probably desire all of the funds to be used for event expenses. AUSA funds were exhausted. There are still funds on gift cards for future Council use.
- 12) The ordering and delivery and dissemination of lunch sandwiches (Chick-Fil-A) went off without a hitch. The order was placed early enough to ensure a morning pickup and payment was made directly from AUSA to CFA. The sandwiches were delivered in temperature controlled pouches. However, there was too much food ordered. The order was for 300 sandwiches. Everybody was fed, including attendees, RSO staff, vendors, and building Talent Management staff. Several had more than one sandwich. 65 sandwiches and 4 boxes of chips went to the Maryland Youth Challenge after they had their fill of food for lunch.
- 13) There were excess donuts, chips, and cases of water left over due to small attendance. There was a lot of pre-event chatter over how to ration food for the intended audience (retirees) but the limited turnout and the abundance of food proved that chatter moot. There were at least 4 dozen donuts, 2 boxes of chips, and 5 cases of water that were excess to need.

DAY OF EVENT OBSERVATIONS

- 14) Agencies time lengthened to give retirees more time , vendor support morning of carry in items.
- 15) The VIP list provided by the Retiree Council to the government was allegedly not contacted.

- 16) Developing the program without any input. The guest speaker's bio was not included but a miniscule representation of the facility was. Funding sponsor's logos were left off initially until the importance of their inclusion was conveyed, and then the programs were reprinted to include the logos. A unilateral decision was made without consulting anyone. The preplanned logo inclusion was discarded by personal decision.

- 17) Signage on event day: other than a few signs posted in official locations (commissary, exchange, health clinic, to name a few) there was little to no advertising of the event. Suggest placement of yard signs advertising the event on grassy areas approaching and after entry gates of the installation at least one month prior to the event. Also consider high traffic areas in Bel Air, Edgewood, Aberdeen, Joppa, Havre de Grace, and similar Cecil County locations. There were no directional signs from the 715 gate (visitors center gate) to MTF. This probably complicated and frustrated those coming from off-post trying to find the event. There were signs from the 22 gate. Add a sign on the Rec Center door to notify those creatures of habit that the event is being held at a different location with the street address of that location.

- 18) The impression gained by the guest speaker, Maryland Secretary of Veterans Affairs, at the relatively small audience considering it represented all military retirees in Harford and Cecil Counties. One would think his staff had researched the population of military retirees in the area and prepped him with possible audience size. It might have subtly embarrassed the installation without being stated. You never have a second chance at a first impression.

- 19) There were 39 tables for vendors set up and several were unused. Although there was good coverage for attendees, many more vendors could have been accommodated for the event. Some vendors complained about the small amount of vendors compared to years past, and the lack of traffic at their tables.

- 20) There was no internet connectivity in the building and very little cell phone connectivity. Many vendors needed Wi-Fi and were unable to fulfill their plans to display their wares. Cell phones simply did not work.
- 21) The vendor room (10A) was very warm. The building air conditioning system fell short of keeping the room cool and comfortable.
- 22) Location change? Mallette, Rec Center, Top of the Bay
- 23) Overall lack of public affairs involvement coverage for the event
- 24) Establish meetings with Garrison and Installation leadership.
- 25) Volunteers, FreeState, color guard, golf carts, anthem singer (Sarah Grant)
- 26) Handicap parking and auditorium seating worked well
- 27) Panel – was it worth it, FMWR, Legal and Kirk?

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

- RSO Office AAR Comments and Government RSO Funding layout (\$10,000 was allocated for the 2023 event, \$7,000 was expensed largely to printing, \$3,000 was given back to the Garrison)
- The RSO team was new to the event this year and had no knowledge of how the event was run in the past. There was no corporate knowledge nor accessible lessons learned or history that they could find on their shared drive. It was a struggle to bring the team up to speed and the lack of experience caused some rough communication and hasty decisions. The RSO team should develop a continuity book on this event for next year.
- The co-chairs need to be cautious and insistent when briefing the incoming Garrison Commander so as not to convey the impression that the Retiree Council is still in the event planning and execution business. Ensure the Garrison understands that this is an official garrison function

with the Commander responsible and the RSO tasked with execution. The incoming Commander briefing is the exact opportunity to divest ourselves of those functions but to also let the Commander know that we will assist if asked but not take the lead.